

INSIDE TRACKS

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DEC 6 1993

Hunter Kills Lion in Self Defense

It's something most hunters think about, but hope never happens.

On the second day of general deer/elk season, Larry Waller was hunting on a mountain west of Kalispell when he heard a low growl. He turned and saw an adult mountain lion about 45 feet away.

"She was coming over a rock ledge, right at me," said Waller. "By the time I swung around to face her I didn't have time to try to shout or enlarge my image, I didn't even have time for a warning shot." Waller shot the cat and killed it when it was about 20 feet away. He said that female was accompanied by two young lions which ran away as she charged.

Waller added that he is 6' 3", and he stood in full view of the lion. "I think she knew what I was," he said. "I really didn't want to shoot her, but I felt that I had no choice."

Waller walked back down the mountain and called a game warden. The warden accompanied Waller back to the site of the attack and confirmed that Waller acted in self defense. The men then packed out the lion, which was shipped to the FWP Wildlife Lab in Bozeman for analysis.

SELF DEFENSE.

Larry Waller shows the lion he had to shoot when it attacked him. According to game wardens, Waller acted properly under the circumstances. FWP headquarters as a brochure available listing steps to help those who may encounter a mountain lion.



"Mr. Waller did everything right under the circumstances," said Warden Sergeant Mack Long. "You should do everything possible to avoid a problem with a lion, but at the point where you feel your life is threatened you have no choice but to act."

Long added that it's important to leave the scene just as it occurred. "That way we can see just what you saw, and we can determine what happened," he said.

A brochure available at FWP headquarters, "Living with Mountain Lions," lists the following steps if a lion is encountered:

- Stay calm: talk to the lion in a confident voice;
- Do not run: try to back slowly away from the lion;
- Do not turn your back on the lion: face the cat, maintain eye contact;
- Do all you can to enlarge your image.

According to Long, if a hunter follows these steps no problem will occur in 99.9 percent of the cases. If the lion does attack, fighting back has been shown to be effective. "Shoot the lion only as a last resort," he said.

Wildlife Manager Jim Cross noted

that lion numbers have increased following years of high deer populations.

"This is more than just the story of a man and a lion on a mountain, it's indicative of a growing problem," he said. "We really don't have a handle on it yet. We can't just throw open the gate, but we are going to be increasing the quotas on lions next year."

Lion Problems? Call FWP!

Warden Captain Ed Kelly said that responding to problems with lions is FWP's top enforcement priority. "We respond to every call regarding a problem lion, particularly in inhabited areas," he said.

"We don't want people to take these situations into their own hands. Our management guidelines clearly state that we won't tolerate problem lions close to areas where people live—if you have a problem, call us first, please. We'll take care of it."

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First-Time Hunter Bags Bull Elk

First-time hunter Toby Ocker, 12, of Bigfork bagged a five-point bull elk on opening day of general big game season. It was the only elk brought through the Swan Valley game check station on opening day.

Ocker, who "smelled the elk" before he saw them, had just completed

his hunter education course from Bigfork Instructor Dennis Kelleher.

Displaying all the characteristics of a seasoned elk hunter, Ocker launched into a 10-minute description of the hunt when he was asked to describe what happened.

"Dad didn't even have to tell me when to shoot," he said. 🦌



BEGINNER'S LUCK? Toby Ocker, a 12-year-old first-time hunter from Bigfork, examines the five-point bull he bagged on opening day. Ocker had just completed his hunter education course from Dennis Kelleher.

Hunter Ed. Instructors Needed

Hunting is one of Montana's most cherished traditions. Perhaps the best way to nurture that tradition is to become a hunter or bowhunter education instructor and pass your knowledge to Montana's youth.

In Region One, more than 200 volunteer instructors each spend an average of about 40 hours per year teaching youth, first-time hunters and others about the basics of hunting safety, responsibility and ethics. Montana's instructors are among the best, and the Montana program consistently ranks in the nation's top 10.

If you'd like to become part of this program, please contact the Region One FWP office in Kalispell and ask for an instructor application. With more instructors, class sizes can be reduced and the quality of instruction each student receives can be increased.

Consider becoming a hunter or bowhunter education instructor and do your part for Montana's hunting heritage.

Hunter Education Instructor Builds Rifle for Charity

It's a young hunter's dream.

Travis Koski of Kalispell won a custom-built 30.06 rifle in a raffle held to raise funds for charitable work done by the Kalispell Lions.

Hunter Education instructor Mel Smart built the rifle and donated it to the raffle as he does each year.

"This year was particularly thrilling for me," said Smart. "Travis had just completed hunter education, and it was just wonderful to see him win the gun."

Koski bought his winning ticket at the Lions' booth at the Fair.

Smart said that he had about 100 hours of work into the gun, which was conservatively valued at \$2,000.

It was the thirteenth gun that Smart has built for the Lions' raffle. This year's raffle raised over \$5,000. 🦌



A DREAM COME TRUE. That's what young hunter Travis Koski thought when he won the 30.06 rifle built by Hunter Education instructor Mel Smart. For 13 years Smart has been building the rifles to benefit the Kalispell Lions charitable activities. (Photo by Kalispell News.)

Hanzel Retires After 36 Years

Is there life after Laney? That's what some folks are asking as longtime Flathead Lake Fisheries Biologist Laney Hanzel prepares to retire on December 31.

Hanzel, who is best known for his enthusiasm and ability to work with people, retires after 36 years of service with FWP, about 25 of those years as Flathead Lake's fisheries biologist.

"I'm hoping that my retirement will offer me more time to enjoy the outdoor activities which I've had less and less time for over the past few years," he said.

Over the years Hanzel developed an advanced knowledge of computer hardware and software that led to his nickname, "Tron." If he was not on Flathead Lake or the Flathead River, he was often in front of his or someone else's computer.

"I enjoyed the challenges of working on the constantly changing, complex fishery of Flathead Lake," said Hanzel. "We designed acoustic gear

appropriate to a large, freshwater lake." Hanzel also adapted an ocean-going boat, which he called the "Dolly Varden," for work on the lake.

One of Hanzel's favorite responsibilities was working with the Flathead Conservation District on streambed protection projects. He is an avid sailor, and enjoys fishing and hunting. He and his wife, Betty, raised two daughters and two sons.

Hanzel noted that he may need a period of adjustment after being involved in a profession for so many years. He began working summers for FWP in 1952 as a sophomore in high school. He graduated from Montana State University with a Master of Science degree in

fish and wildlife management in 1959, then began working full time with FWP.

"Although I may be retired, I plan on keeping active in the public process of preserving the Flathead's aquatic resources," Hanzel said.



Fenton Donates Grizzly Hide for Lobby Display

Long-time Montana resident and outdoorsman Earl Fenton has donated a large grizzly hide to FWP for display and educational use. The hide can be viewed at the FWP headquarters lobby in Kalispell.

"I spent a lot of time in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in the 1950s," said Fenton, who has a large collection of photos from areas around the "Bob" including Big Salmon Lake. With the help of two friends, Pat Harbin and Carl Grossweiler, Fenton shot the grizzly a number of miles east and south of the lake in the early 1950s.

When asked to describe the hunt, Fenton said in understatement, "There wasn't much to it."

"I was a young girl at the time, but I remember that Dad was very excited about getting the bear," said Fenton's daughter, Dotty Restout of Kalispell. She said that it was on the wall for many years at the family home and

attracted quite a bit of attention.

Fenton donated the bear hide so

that school kids and others could see the magnificence of the animal.



GRIZZLY EDUCATION. Earl Fenton, long-time Montana resident and outdoorsman, donated the hide from a large grizzly he shot in the 1950s. It will be used for display and education at the FWP headquarters in Kalispell.

Dens Ready for Orphan Black Bear Cubs

With the help of volunteers, FWP biologists have prepared seven potential denning sites for four orphan black bear cubs now being held at the Wildlife Shelter in Helena.

"We received a tremendous response from our call for volunteers," said FWP Wildlife Manager Jim Cross. "Four people, Dave Armer, Julie Herndon, Chelsea Evans, and Isan Brant helped us prepare the dens." Cross said a total of 15 people volunteered to help dig the dens, and that he will contact some of these folks to help transport the bears by snowmobile and place them in the dens later this winter.

The technique of placing orphan black bear cubs in dens has been pioneered in Montana by Vince Yannone of FWP's Conservation Education Division in Helena. According to Yannone about 40 cubs have been placed in dens in Montana with excellent success.

Several orphan cubs have been successfully placed in dens in northwest Montana. Last year a cub raised by wildlife rehabilitator Beth Sorensen was placed in a den in the Yaak drainage and survived well.

The cubs are held and fed until they reach about 80-100 pounds. Food and water are then removed and the cub enters prolonged sleep until moved to the den site. It's necessary to tranquilize the cub when it's moved. If everything goes well, the cub accepts the den and resumes prolonged sleep until spring.

"The advantages of this program are many," said Cross. "It's a good opportunity for public participation in wildlife management, it will help the black bear population, and it gives these orphan cubs a chance they wouldn't normally have."

HEADED FOR AN ARTIFICIAL DEN. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist Tim Thier carries a tranquilized bear cub to a sled bound for an artificial den in the Yaak.



INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One

**Montana Department of
Fish, Wildlife & Parks**



Dan Vincent, Supervisor
Jim Cross, Wildlife Manager
Jim Vashro, Fisheries Manager
Dave Conklin, Parks Manager
Ed Kelly, Warden Captain
John Fraley, Information Officer, Newsletter Editor



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